TRIBUTE TO CHARLES

Edw. Nazarov

CHARLES SAMU

FILM MISSIONARY EXTRAORDINARY
and GENUINE "LEO"

The first Zagreb Animation Festival started it. Leo Dratfield got him the job. Charles did the rest.

He brought together East and West film artists like no other individual. Charles was a one man cultural ambassador finding audiences for foreign filmmakers.

The Leo Dratfield Endowment, with ASIFA-EAST, honors Charles each year with a Samu award. It appropriately goes to an animator for creating a film with a "universal message illuminating our growing sense of world community."

As did Leo, Charles unselfishly devoted his life to helping others. No wonder then that he served as the first chairman of our Executive Committee--a genuine "Leo" all the way.

THE LEO DRATFIELD ENDOWMENT
USA

Presented at the Zagreb Animation Festival, Yugoslavia, June 1990.

A belated farewell

Someone is missing from the world of animation. His name is not preserved on any main title credits, yet Charles was a true animator, in the noblest sense of the word: he animated people who animated films, giving them hope and encouragement wherever he went. Instead of actually creating films, he "made" them, devoting his whole life to the task of promoting those sometimes tiny but always gemstones that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.
And what comes after? Memories. Memories of a good man, a quiet American with a European mind. An example of goodwill and gentleness worth following. Goodbye, Charles Samu, my faraway friend. You will never be forgotten.

Peter Tiborszky
Hungary

I had known Charles for many years during the time I produced animation compilation programmes, first for BBC TV, and later for Channel Four TV. He was always friendly and pleasant, and I learned a great deal from his immense knowledge of animation. He was a lovely man, and I am so sorry that he is gone.

Richard Evans
UK

It was Charles Samu, when I was a fledgling president of ASIFA HOLLYWOOD, who shepherded me in obtaining forms and shipping films to festivals around the world; who, with patience and humor, initiated this novice with procedures with customs for exchange reels, who organized, entertained, loved animation and those who people it. Flatteringly, it was he who called me periodically soliciting assistance because I know "practically everyone in the business." A photo of Charles and me, taken in Zagreb, will ever be in my home, and he in my thoughts and heart.

June Foray
USA

For several decades Charles Samu built and maintained a bridge between the best of European and American animation. He acted as an ambassador for the best of American material in Russia, Bulgaria, and especially in Yugoslavia, a place he considered as his second home.
For his selfless fight for better conditions for animation, and for his modesty and bright spirits, we are all deeply grateful and cherish his memory forever.

John Halas
UK

CHARLES VAULTING THE BARRICADE AT CUSTOMS, SMUGGLING ANIMATED BOOTY TO AND FROM THE FAR CORNERS OF OUR WORLD.
PART BUSINESSMAN, PART ARCHIVIST-CRITIC, PART KID, PART AMBASSADOR, CHARLES WAS OUR PREMIER
ANI-MAVEN.
GEORGE GRIFFIN

George Griffin,
USA

CHARLES SAMU was animation's good will ambassador and he was my friend. I can personally attest to his unceasing promotion of independent animators and their work. He was also an irreplaceable resource of information about animation, and a reliable, intelligent, caring clearing house for visiting artists, producers, distributors and teachers. He had a marvelous sense of humor...sharp and ironic, in contrast to his gentle public persona.
How enriched we all were by Charles on so many levels, and what a terrible loss.
I miss him.

John Canemaker
USA

Charles was almost the only source in the US for non-commercial animated films with serious themes and innovative techniques.
He was able to make arrangements for us to have animation artists from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and East Germany visit our school (RISD), and speak to our students. Charles himself gave exciting lectures and film presentations to our students of work from Asia and the rest of Europe.
Charles was one of the most charming and diplomatic of men. His taste in animation was broad and his knowledge about each film was extensive. He opened the doors of international animation to a whole generation of American animators. We mourn his loss personally and for animation education, but we celebrate the years that he was with us, and the things he made possible.

Yvonne Andersen
USA

There was only one Charles Samu who in one person was the critique, counselor, incentive, friend, and client of an animator.

John Gati
USA

I don't remember exactly when I first met Charles Samu, but I suppose it was at one of the early Zagreb Festivals. One tends to feel as if good friends have always been around. Especially when we were together at one festival or another for so many years.
I do remember, however, our many conversations, his vast knowledge of the who, what, where, when, and how of the Animated Film, his organizational talents, good cheer, and special way of making newcomers feel at home.
In addition to being a personal loss, his demise is a loss for the entire world of animation. We will all miss him deeply.

Bob Balser
Spain

Charles Samu, a missionary of animation.

Charles served as a link for the cultural exchange of personal creative animation, between East and West. Thanks only to him, the kind of animation being produced behind the "Iron Curtain" was able to reach audiences in the West, and vice versa. He had his own methods with which he succeeded in that, much more than any official organizations, ambassadors, or representatives could ever do.

Yoresh
Israel

My favorite memories of Charlie were not in New York, wearing a suit & tie ~ but at Ottawa or Annecy, in a loud Hawaiian shirt ~ relaxed & making introductions.
© CANDY KUGEL

Candy Kugel
USA

In our lives we have only rare chances to meet those few people who are bathed in light...people who remain in our memories, like Charles.
That is why, in the midst of our simple lives, the memory emerges of a very real man, ironic yet creative, energetic and quite gentle.
Charles did so much for lovers of animation, and for the professionals from two distant parts of the world, giving them the possibility of getting to know each other. He spent his life in bringing people together, and especially in our time, is anything more important?

Andrej Khrzhanovsky
USSR

Among the great moments offered by Zagreb Festival, there was the pleasure to meet Charles Samu, one of the most constant and active participants. When I met Charles there for the first time, I took him for one of the Yugoslavian Organizers because of his efficiency in solving problems, arranging meetings between delegates, introducing guests to one another; also because of his special suit woven in some traditional local material. With years passing by, Charles' attire became more classical, but his activity for animation was still there.
A penetrating glance that caught you, a smile changing into a loud laugh that welcomed you...such was meeting Charles again.
Did you need to buy some rare print for educational purposes, a word to Charles and he would produce a tempting list of titles.
The background of Zagreb was part of Charles' personality. This is why we felt so disoriented by his absence in 1988. This is why, this year, we are happy to have his memory back in the space he left.

Nicole Salomon
France

Dear Charles,

I miss you. I miss your wit, your brightness, your sense of play. I miss the low-tech lunches at our office. I miss the Japanese restaurants.
I miss your bottomless well of information for whatever I want to know about European animators. I miss the trips to Houston, to Annecy, to everywhere. I miss the fun of being on panels with you, of screening films with you, of disagreeing with you (you were wonderful to disagree with).
I miss your smile followed by your dimples, your twinkling eyes...your constant good humor...your friendship.

With much love,
Bernice Coe
USA

A WEEK WITH CHARLES SAMU

I asked Charles once in a private moment, "Do you really feel happy, Charles?" He answered with a slight smile on his lips, "Don't you think it is too late for such a philosophical question, Noureddin!"
It was then that he opened his cellar, where I found his real love and life. A treasure of short animated films from eastern and western countries that he had collected through the long years of his life. This was the time I discovered the real Charles Samu. He had something worthy to love. He was a person who looked different to me from others, and I loved the guy.

N. Zarrinkelk
Iran

CHARLES --

The humor...the warmth...the incisive intellect... hearing him describe a new animated film, or a new taste sensation...the chance meeting on a street in New York, in Zagreb, in Annecy...the way he was able to make any situation seem like fun...I will always miss him...he has left a great emptiness all over the world.

Iris Beckerman
USA

Charles
For over 15 years, Charles never ceased to be there for American animators who wanted to open their lives and their work to the world and to animators in Moscow and Budapest and Sophia who wished to touch Americans if only for a week or two. He was an impressario, a mediator, a host, a friend, and a brother to so many of us around the world, asking too little in return. And now that he is gone, all of us struggle with our efforts and our friendships to fill the emptiness of the passing of a single man.

David Ehrlich
USA

I only met Charles for a few moments a few times, but we had a couple of tough-minded phone conversations about the excesses of my newsletter. After one particularly sobering conversation when he raked me over the coals for my failings as an animation critic, Charles told me that nonetheless he thought that I was without a doubt the best writer in English about animation at the current time. I was on Cloud Nine for a few weeks after hearing those words and they're part of what's at the heart of why I keep writing for people like Charles who loved the art as much as I do.

Bob Kalin
USA

Charles and me were sitting just face to face in a very cozy small bar somewhere around Fifth Avenue in New York City. Two guys, both corpulent, and crazy for sweets and happiness. Having just finished my strange-looking desert, I was looking at Charles, who ate a cut of extremely green ice-cream I had never seen before. He had become a very special, amorphous part of that frozen green poem, as well. Suddenly he put a portion on his spoon and offered it to me. The green miracle was sweet.

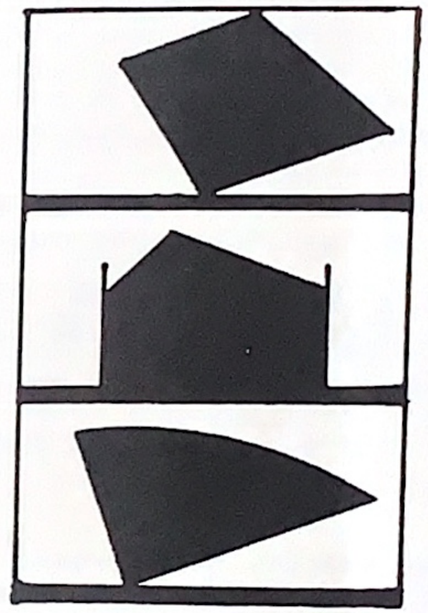
Istvan Antal
Hungary

Besides his human gifts, Charles Samu had a rare quality that was dear to me. He had a very deep culture and was very good at abstract thinking (which is not common for an American, used to pragmatism) but he preferred to do things better than watch them. Only when needed, when he had a speech to deliver, or an essay to write, did he use and show his intellectual and scholarly qualities. He was a true example of an intelligent person who doesn't bother glorifying either his intelligence or intelligence at large.

Giannalberto Bendazzi
Italy

I remember being convulsed by Charles' imitations of various ASIFA board members. This came as a grand surprise as I miscalculated the extent of his many hidden talents. When, on another occasion with Emily, Charles began "These Portraits," again, we were literally on the floor! Too bad that we didn't tape him! Or maybe somebody did.

Faith Hubley
USA



Jules Engel
USA

Thank you Charles on behalf of a large gang of film-makers who were inspired to do better things by (your) events, and probably remain unaware that you were responsible.

Bob Verrall
Canada

I can see his house very clearly. In autumn of 1987, it became my home and Khitruk's. In my mind, I walk up the stairs. Along the walls, drawings from Animated films are exhibited.
I can see his funny silhouette, his rain coat, his large hat that is used as an umbrella. He waves us farewell, smiles, and disappears.
At that time, he had us discover American animation, and he revealed Soviet animation to the Americans.
Let's get together among friends and remember Charles Samu's smile.

Yuri Norstein
USSR

Charles was an ice-breaker in the cold war period of Soviet-American connections. He tried to break that bloody ice using the art of animation, and with great success, no less than Gorbachev does now using the art of policy.
In fact, Charles was a great man. I'll be proud being his friend until my end...because we have not even made our farewells.

Edward Nazarov
USSR

In March it was exactly seven years since I had the opportunity to spend a month in Charles' company in the US. He organized my visit with meticulous care. That was unforgettable even by itself, but even more, he also radiated human warmth and enthusiasm for the values of the genre. A little later he visited Hungary, and brought some important works of independent animation from the US. I remember how, after an all night exhausting trip he refused even to have help in carrying drums of film. He was incredibly versatile, and his departure leaves a painful empty space in us.

Gyorgy Matolcsy
Hungary

A SEAT ON THE AISLE

During his life, Charles was our student, our brother, and our guide. He would see hope where we often saw none, and he had faith when we saw bankruptcy. He was also a missionary for animation as he and his wife, Cathy Borka, traveled, listened and taught about this very special medium, telling stories of the animators of Tashkent. And, no doubt, he told them stories about us. I can hear his deep laugh now.

He expanded the world of animation not only through his distribution but also through his personal concern for animators and animation. I hope that there are followers worthy of his accomplishments who will find new and more profitable paths for animation and carry on what has just begun. I miss Matko. I miss Leo and I miss my colleague and friend. Charles, now what are you watching? Save me a seat on the aisle.

Prescott Wright
USA

Charles had a love for animation that touched all who came in contact with him. It was contagious. He had an enthusiasm and an energy, when it came to animation, that seemed superhuman. Nothing seemed to stop him. In his death he reminds us of how very human he was. I am grateful to have known him and feel inspired by his memory. I only wish I had gotten to know him better.

Talia Thelma Schenkel
USA

Michael Sporn
USA

"There is a world of fascinating cinema that most people never view. These films, many of them short, many independently produced under difficult circumstances, provide a direct look into the soul of the cultures of other lands, and into the personal visions of their creators. My goal is to present and write about these films for the audiences who would not otherwise experience them. Film and video remain the strongest bridge between people, available in the arts today."

Charles Samu, 1987

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